DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 372 888 RC 019 701

AUTHOR Cox, Barbara, Ed.
TITLE Learning Communities in Teacher Education Programs: Four Success Stories.
INSTITUTION Tomas Rivera Center, Claremont, CA.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 33p.; Photographs will not reproduce clearly.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Students; Demonstration Programs; *Educational Strategies; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Hispanic Americans; Mexican American Education; *Minority Group Teachers; *Program Descriptions; *Student Recruitment; *Teacher Education Programs; Universities
IDENTIFIERS *Latinos; *Learning Communities; Student Support Services

ABSTRACT

This report describes a program implemented by the Tomas Rivera Center (Claremont, California) to increase the number of well-prepared Latino teachers. Based on the concept of learning communities, the program aims to reduce the isolation experienced by minority students, offer support services that help nontraditional students satisfy academic requirements, encourage professional development by linking students with minority teachers, and encourage young Latinos to consider teaching as a profession. In 1991, four university schools of education were chosen as demonstration research sites that would develop variations of a learning community model within 2 years. Sites included California State University (San Bernardino), San Diego State University, Southwest Texas State University (San Marcos), and University of Texas at El Paso. All four enrolled substantial numbers of Latino students. Programs are described in terms of goals, target population, key components including most successful program components, number of participating students, and areas for future development. In addition, each university is described in terms of location, faculty, number of students, and focus of teacher education programs. Participants indicated that the programs relieved their sense of isolation and helped them to complete class requirements, increase their level of responsibility, and improve their study skills. (LP)

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LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Four Success Stories

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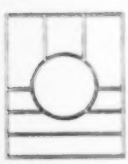

THE TOMÁS RIVERA CENTER

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The Trustees of The Tomas Rivera Center gratefully acknowledge the support of the Exxon Education Foundation. Since 1988, the Foundation has provided grants to the Center to design better recruitment and training programs for Latino teachers and to improve the preparation of all teachers of Latino students.

Learning Communities in Teacher Education Programs

Four Success Stories

THE TOMÁS RIVERA CENTER

A National Institute for Policy Studies

PROJECT DIRECTORS:
Raymond E. Castro
Yolanda Rodríguez Ingle

EDITOR:
Barbara Cox

DATA COLLECTION:
Maura Harrington

DESIGN:
Long & Associates

RESEARCH ASSISTANT:
Rachel Gaxiola

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710 North College Avenue
Claremont, California 91711

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the commitment and energies of the administrators and project directors of California State University, San Bernardino; San Diego State University; Southwest Texas State University; and The University of Texas at El Paso, the work reported in this document would never have been possible. These leaders supported establishing a learning community model in their schools of education and worked toward successful implementation throughout the two years of the project. In particular, Leslie Huling-Austin, Margarita Calderón, Francisco Hidalgo, and Richard Pacheco, deserve recognition for their extraordinary contributions.

The two Texas sites received continual support and supplementary funds. We wish to thank the Texas Education Agency, in particular, Commissioner "Skip" Meno and Evangelina Galván, State Director of Programs as well as the State Board of Education.

Representatives of all nine member institutions of the TRC Southwest Teacher Development Network—the four project sites as well as New Mexico State University; University of Southern California; New Mexico Highlands University; California State University-Chico; and University of Texas Pan American at Edinburg—provided information, critical suggestions, and collegial support all along the way. These individuals, Rosalinda Barrera, Rodolfo Chávez Chávez, Esteban Diaz, Michael Genzuk, Guilbert Hentschke, Juan Juárez, Esther Larocco, Graciela Mendiola, Alicia Mensor, Ricardo Pérez, and Charles Zartman, Jr., believed in the learning community model from the beginning and provided perceptive recommendations throughout the stages of implementation. For their contributions, we are sincerely grateful.

Professor Rodolfo O. de la Garza, TRC vice president and professor of government at the University of Texas at Austin, who reviewed our work and the drafts of this evaluation, was instrumental in clarifying our ideas and helping us assure accuracy in our presentation.

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Foreword

Within the next few decades, more than one fourth of all the nation's school children will be Latino. Policymakers are only beginning to realize the importance of properly educating Latino children; beginning to understand the potential disastrous consequences of a significant segment of tomorrow's work force that might be ill-educated and underprepared; beginning to develop an awareness of the potential richness of an educated, productive Latino population as a fully participating segment of U.S. society.

Since its inception in 1985, The Tomás Rivera Center has worked to improve policies and practices that affect the education of Latino children. The TRC has addressed literacy and classroom language, ethnic bias in curricula and learning materials, ways to increase the dialogue between school and community, and ways to inform Latino administrators and school board members about key issues. The great need for well-prepared Latino teachers has been among the foremost of the Center's concerns; we have, therefore, concentrated TRC energies and expertise on documenting that need and finding ways to change that reality.

For the past two years, with generous support from the Exxon Education Foundation, the TRC has worked with schools of education in four major universities to find ways to recruit more Latinos to the teaching profession and to assure that more Latino students fulfill the requirements necessary for entering the teaching work force. Some of the fruits of that work are reported in this document.

By no means does the end of this project signal a close of the TRC's work in Latino teacher education. To the contrary, for the TRC, this report and the results of this work are but a glimpse of future efforts to increase the numbers of well-prepared Latino teachers. Plans now include addressing policies that will enable educators to draw from alternative pools of teacher candidates such as paraprofessionals, policies that will help disseminate successful teacher education practices, policies that will help support Latino teacher education candidates and help increase their abilities to contribute to their communities' well-being. Latino children must—*and will*—see more Latino teachers in their classrooms in the near rather than the distant future.

Harry P. Pachon, Ph.D.
President

The nation's need for minority teachers, particularly Latino teachers, is especially critical in light of recent evidence regarding effects of Latino teachers on key educational factors. We now know from empirical evidence that when school districts include significant numbers of Latino teachers on their faculties, Latino children are misdiagnosed as educationally handicapped less often and are identified as gifted students more often; drop-out rates fall and the academic performance of Latino children, as assessed by standardized tests, is better (Clark, 1993). Nearly half of the nation's 22.4 million Latinos live in California and Texas. More than a third of the students in these states are Latino; fewer than 10 percent of California teachers and fewer than 15 percent of Texas teachers are Latino. To achieve parity, that is, to have minorities represented in the teaching force at proportions similar to those in which they are represented as students, at least 500,000 of the estimated 1.5 million teachers hired throughout the United States by the mid-1990s would have to be minority. As it stands, however, all students will see fewer, not more, minority teachers in the near future. Most Latino students will continue to lack positive Latino role models in their schools, and few non-Latino students will interact with or observe Latinos in the role of professional, visible, positively influential adults.

The Tomás Rivera Center (TRC) is seeking to change this circumstance by working with colleges and universities to increase the number of well-prepared Latino teachers in the nation's classrooms. Teacher preparation programs must help assure that Latino students overcome barriers related to poor academic preparation, stereotyping (in particular, low expectations), social isolation, an inhospitable environment, and limited financial resources.

To increase the number of Latino teachers, training programs must also begin to recruit students with a strong interest in teaching who may not meet conventional requirements. In 1988, the TRC identified 46 colleges and universities in the Southwest that had a high number or substantial proportion of Latinos in their teacher training programs or had programs intended to improve the access of Latinos to the teaching profession. A detailed survey of these institutions helped identify the barriers that keep so many Latinos from entering or, once enrolled, from completing teacher education programs. Also identified were practices that hold promise for increasing the number of well-trained Latino teachers. The teacher preparation programs surveyed had all enjoyed some measure of success with recruitment, retention, assessment, and placement—but no program had integrated a wide range of effective practices.

One approach that has been successful in retaining minority students, as demonstrated specifically in minority engineering programs, is the learning community. Learning community programs integrate comprehensive student advising, basic skills development, and supportive environments that enable students to maximize their performance. In 1991, four universities' schools of education were chosen as demonstration research sites for their own specific, planned variations of a learning community model developed by the TRC. The four universities were California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), San Diego State University (SDSU), Southwest Texas State University (SWT), and the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). All four enrolled significant numbers of Latino students, were committed to satisfying the needs of Latino students, had a cadre of Latino faculty, and were assured of support by their administrations. All four agreed to implement a TRC interactional learning community program integrating a cluster of related practices.

A Learning Community Concept

The early basis for this project was the Minority Engineering Program (MEP) first implemented at California State University, Northridge. These programs recruit and train minority engineering students throughout the country to improve the academic performance and graduation rates by: (a) building a supportive academic environment and (b) promoting a high level of collaborative learning. They work toward creating the conditions necessary for students to develop academic relationships and by implementing structured study groups. Both efforts, in the long run, significantly improve academic performance and graduation rates. The most successful programs apply both approaches—academic support and collaborative learning—simultaneously.

The TRC learning community model included both the successful components of the MEP architecture and added two factors that research has underscored as critical. To developing a sense of community, of participation, and of mutual support by peers, and academic support from mentoring, tutorials, and workshops, the TRC model added an early recruitment component and a professional development perspective. For the former, recruitment programs were planned for high school levels; for the latter, teacher education students were linked with practicing teachers and working classrooms to increase a sense of professionalism and career awareness.

The TRC learning community model:

creates a sense of community that reduces the sense of isolation experienced by many minority students

offers academic support that helps nontraditional students satisfy academic requirements and complete their course work

encourages professional development by linking students with minority teachers in both the university and the field

works to encourage young Latinos to consider teaching as a profession and attract them to college programs that provide adequate preparation.

The TRC Learning Community Model Projects

The TRC, with funding from the Exxon Education Foundation, enabled the four demonstration sites to adapt aspects of the model to fit their particular situation. Education programs often serve students who enter the university at different stages in their education and study in various departments. All four institutions recognized the need to recruit and retain more Latinos and to produce better-prepared teachers. This two-year project worked to accomplish the following: (1) identify the goals and target group(s) they most wanted to attract and support; (2) realistically evaluate the available resources and commitment of faculty and administration to an integrated, campus-wide approach; (3) design and operate a learning community in their teacher education program.

This exploratory project gave each university the widest latitude possible for designing and implementing a learning community. Each had a different goal, different target group, and different degree of institutional support (see pages 4 and 5). The project's ultimate impact on recruitment and retention—both in the university and in the classroom—and on the preparedness of teachers remains for long-term assessment.

The following sections describe the approach taken and observations from each of the demonstration sites relative to their fundamental goals: To increase the awareness of faculty and administration of the needs of Latino students and to demonstrate that a learning community offers a successful vehicle for meeting those needs.

Characteristics of the Four Projects

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO

Goals

Identify and support prospective teachers; attract students to the teacher education program; and help them overcome social and academic obstacles to staying in school

Target Population

Students belonging to an underrepresented ethnic group fitting into one of the following groups and intending to pursue a teaching credential:

- First-time incoming freshmen
- Transfers from a community college or another university
- Continuing students at CSUSB

Key Components

- Peer mentoring
- Use of the Learning Community Center for meetings and sharing resources
- Community building through social and cultural events
- Tracking academic performance and referring students for academic services

Scope

Thirty-nine and forty-two active student participants in 1991–92 and 1992–93, respectively

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Goals

Identify why so few students pursue a teaching credential; address identified barriers and move potential teachers successfully through their undergraduate studies and the credential program

Target Population

Any Latino from the following groups interested in becoming a teacher:

- Freshmen at SDSU
- Freshmen at community colleges
- Juniors at SDSU who transferred from a community college
- Graduates who did not continue for a teaching credential

Key Components

- Study and support groups
- OXLE (Future Hispanic Teacher Club)
- Advising on the program and certification
- Preparation for examinations

Scope

Twenty-four active student participants in 1991–92 and twenty in 1992–93

SOUTHWEST TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Goals

Tap an alternative pool of teacher candidates and create a learning community in which undergraduates gain reality-based experience and teacher aides gain the opportunity to become certified

Target Population

Any person from the following groups interested in becoming a teacher:

- Junior or senior minority students in the teacher education program
- Teacher aides in the public school district who are interested in attending college and becoming teachers

Key Components

Field-based classroom experience for students in teacher education
Release time from work and financial assistance for teacher aides to attend classes
Weekly project seminars and support groups
Social events

Scope

Ten undergraduates and ten teacher aides in 1991–92 and in 1992–93

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

Goals

Increase the pool of high school students entering the university in general and the School of Education in particular and support students already in the Alternative Certification Program

Target Population

Any person interested in or actually teaching bilingual education fitting into one of the following groups:

Participants in an Alternative Certification Program (persons with a bachelor's degree who want to change careers)
High school students interested in attending UTEP
Public school teachers in El Paso and Juárez

Key Components

Use of the Teacher Learning Community Center for studying, meetings, and workshops
Aid in preparing for examinations
High school student recruitment and parental involvement
Community outreach comprised of cultural and educational exchange between El Paso and Juárez teachers

Scope

Twenty-four and eleven active participants who were enrolled in the Alternative Certification Program in 1991–92 and 1992–93, respectively, forty high school students, and 150 teachers from Juárez

Participant Characteristics[a] (Percent)

		CSUSB		SDSU		SWT		UTEP	
Characteristic		1991–92	1992–93	1991–92	1992–93	1991–92	1992–93	1991–92	1992–93
Gender	Male	25.6	26.2	25.0	10.0	10.0	20.0	50.0	45.5
	Female	74.4	73.8	75.0	90.0	90.0	80.0	50.0	54.5
Age (in years)	18–21	43.6	35.5	45.8	40.0	30.0	40.0	8.3	9.1
	22–30	28.2	40.5	29.2	40.0	45.0	30.0	33.3	27.3
	31 or older	28.2	26.2	25.0	20.0	25.0	30.0	58.4	63.6
	Age Range	17–51	19–45	19–33	19–33	20–47	21–46	24–55	20–52
Ethnicity	Latino	92.2	90.4	95.8	100.0	90.0	80.0	91.7	90.9
	African American	2.6	4.8	–	–	10.0	20.0	–	–
	Native American	2.6	4.8	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Caucasian	2.6	–	4.2	–	–	–	8.3	9.1

[a] Data are estimated from survey responses from 75 percent of the participants.

California State University, San Bernardino

The California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) campus is located 60 miles east of Los Angeles. The campus serves two counties, Riverside and San Bernardino, which cover 27,400 square miles and are projected to grow 4 percent a year through 2000. Total enrollment is approximately 13,000 students; 63 percent are enrolled full time and over 16 percent are Latinos. Overall, approximately one-quarter of the student body drops out of school each year.

The School of Education has 70 full-time faculty: eight Latinos, four African Americans, and one Japanese. In addition, eight Latinos teach and supervise student teachers as part-time faculty. Three academic departments are affiliated with the School of Education: elementary and bilingual education, secondary and vocational education, and advanced studies.

The CSUSB teacher education program prepares teachers to serve in schools with large numbers of Latino pupils. In San Bernardino County, 255,000 students were enrolled in kindergarten through the twelfth grade in 1989, and this is expected to reach 350,000 students in 1995. The county's thirty-three school districts employ about 12,500 teachers. In San Bernardino and Riverside counties, respectively, only 1.0 and 1.5 percent of all teachers are certified as bilingual. In contrast, 28 percent of the enrollment is Latino and 40 percent is minority. The number of students with limited English proficiency, most of whom are Latinos, has doubled in the past eight years.

CSUSB LEARNING COMMUNITY

Goals

Recognizing the need to train more Latinos to be teachers, particularly bilingual, bicultural teachers, CSUSB sought to support prospective teachers using services available throughout the university as well as new services offered through a learning community center in the School of Education. Among the goals was attracting students to the teacher education program and helping underrepresented students succeed and remain in the program by eliminating the social and academic barriers to their success.

Target Population

The CSUSB Learning Community target population consisted of students belonging to an underrepresented ethnic group, particularly Latinos, who expressed an intent to pursue a teaching credential.

Key Components

The project's first task was to identify, with the help of the Admissions Office, the Office of Undergraduate Studies, and the Center for Educational Equity, prospective teachers among Latinos and other minorities enrolled at the university and to catalog the existing net-

work of support services. The second task was to conceptualize and begin to implement a learning community center within the School of Education.

Close collaboration between project directors and university administrators is key to successful implementation of learning community programs.

The Learning Community Center provided orientation, academic support, and referrals to institutional resources and services. Orientation included information on scheduling, registration, and program requirements; academic support included monitoring the progress of particular students, preparing them for examinations, and making rooms available for group study. Referrals included facilitating access to outreach and recruitment services offered through, for example, Upward Bound, Cal SOAP, and the Future Teacher Club; transfer and transition services offered through the Transfer Center and the Summer Transition and Enrichment Program; and tutoring and student services offered through the Faculty Student Mentoring Program, Student Assistance in Learning, Financial Aid and Equal Opportunity Program, and the School of Education Learning Center. The School of Education Learning Center, for example, offered free tutoring for many undergraduate courses, writing assistance at all levels, administration of tests for self-paced courses, computer training, English as a Second Language assistance, information on study skills, and listening facilities for taped lectures.

The cornerstone of the Learning Community Center was a system of peer mentoring, or "chain mentoring," in which a student mentor, with the advice of a faculty mentor, provided a student on an earlier step of the career ladder

Peer mentoring created a sense of community among program participants.

with career counseling, advice on credentialing, and culturally relevant personal counseling. With twenty students participating actively in the program and five peer counselors hired in 1991–92, the ratio of students to mentors was 5:1. The second year, more mentors were hired. Practicing teachers in the schools, student teachers, undergraduate students, and even high school members of the Future Teacher Club were encouraged to participate in this system of support. As a resource center and meeting place, the Learning Community Center also sought to build a sense of community and mutual support through social and cultural events, such as the Cinco de Mayo celebration.

Most Successful Components

SETTING UP a system to identify and track potential teachers was a major undertaking that promises to improve the school's ability to recruit students into the School of Education and to measure their progress and success once they are in the program; it also promises to improve monitoring so that students can get help when they first encounter problems, not after they have failed.

THE EFFORT to devise and implement a system of peer mentoring and referrals put into practice the concept of a learning community that alleviates social and cultural isolation, strengthens academic skills, and promotes a sense of community among students.

ONCE ESTABLISHED, the system successfully recruited participants who served as peer mentors, group leaders, and participants.

Areas for Future Development

REGULAR, STABLE support for the center will minimize disruptions in the program and enhance the center's use as a gathering place for students.

IMPROVED SCHEDULING coordination should enhance the involvement both of faculty and mentors who are already overburdened with responsibilities, and of students who cannot always attend workshops and cultural events because of other commitments.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN Undergraduate Studies and the School of Education should be strengthened so that prospective students who have not yet declared an interest in teaching can be identified and, possibly, recruited for the teacher preparation program.

WHAT STUDENTS SAID THEY LIKED BEST

Meeting other students with similar backgrounds and interests and feeling connected with a community.

Receiving assistance in meeting deadlines for financial aid, registering for tests, and other academic support.

Planning and attending social activities.

FUTURE OF THE PROJECT

Following a concerted effort to enlist the support of the university's administration, the peer mentoring system and other components of this project will be incorporated into existing programs that operate under the umbrella of the Center for Educational Equity.

San Diego State University

San Diego State University (SDSU) is located in a diverse metropolitan center 25 miles from the U.S. border with Mexico. Serving a population of over 2 million people, 27 percent of whom are Latinos, the university takes advantage of the array of social, cultural, scientific, and technical resources of the region to enhance its programs and research.

Primarily a commuter school, SDSU has an enrollment of about 33,000 students, the approximate equivalent of 2,000 full-time students. Students typically take fewer than 15 units a semester. During the 1991 fall semester, 6 percent of the students identified themselves as Chicano or Mexican American, an increase of almost 6 percent from the 1987 fall semester. Approximately 2,000 students are enrolled in liberal studies (the major for elementary teachers) and another 2,000 in 19 majors that support the preparation of secondary teachers. Despite these large numbers, few students pursue their teaching credential. Each year approximately 30 percent of the students drop out.

The College of Education employs 115 professors including three African Americans, sixteen Latinos, four Asians, and one Indian. In 1991–92, 45 Latinos were enrolled in the preservice credential programs, and 20 in the master's program.

Latinos at SDSU tend to be older than other students; many have demanding family and work responsibilities. Virtually all—95 percent—transferred from community colleges in the area.

SDSU

SDSU LEARNING COMMUNITY

Goals

The first goal of the SDSU Learning Community project was to understand why more Latinos are not pursuing a teaching credential. The second goal was to address the barriers and move more potential teachers successfully through their undergraduate studies and the credential program. The major components of the program sought to help students appreciate collaborative work and study and to communicate the complex nature of contemporary teaching through field experiences. As for all of the learning community projects, the ultimate goal was to produce more Latino teachers.

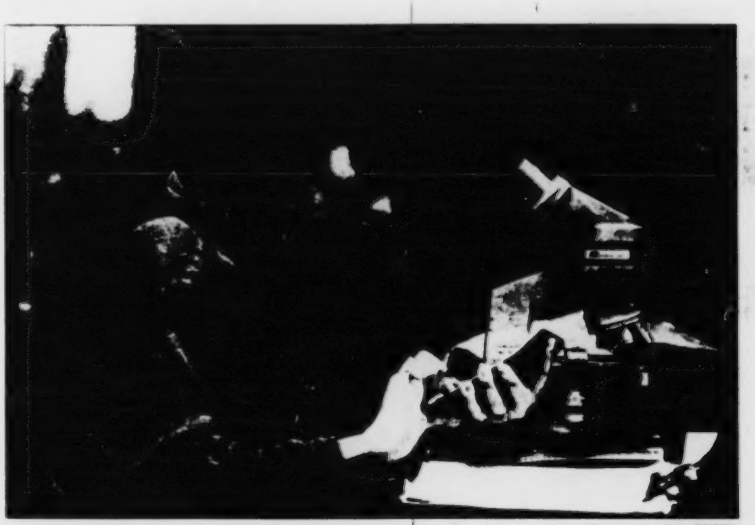
Target Population

The target population consisted of Latino freshmen and transfer students from community colleges who had expressed an interest in teaching as well as college graduates who had studied to be teachers but had not enrolled in the credential program. Freshmen in community colleges were targeted for future recruitment.

Key Components

The first year, the program identified and contacted 2,346 students enrolled in feeder community colleges and 2,319 students enrolled in SDSU (including 197 Latinos

intending to become bilingual teachers). These students received an information packet about their major, which included tips for successfully completing the program and information on financial aid. Moreover, and key to the development of the project, SDSU graduates were contacted and asked why they had not entered the credential program. Their answers helped focus the second-year efforts to establish a learning community.



Learning communities help Latino students adjust to the rigors of college and university demands by providing orientation workshops, academic mentoring, and study skills seminars.

The most common reasons given for not seeking a credential were financial difficulties, family problems, and inability to pass the CBEST. In fact, these students differed from traditional students in many ways: tremendous demands are placed on their time and energy; most are first-generation college students who are daunted by paperwork and fearful of asking questions; they are often intimidated by professors, particularly non-Latinos, and are reluctant to approach them (yet many feel that a personal relation is essential to being evaluated fairly); they process information well when it is presented verbally as well as in writing; and they need assistance to meet deadlines and other requirements.

Once these characteristics were identified, the program began to design ways to eliminate the barriers they implied. Evening classes were offered so students would not have to choose between work and the credential program; a pilot internship was established within six school districts so that students could work as substitute teachers while pursuing their credential; and workshops were offered to prepare students who failed the CBEST on their first try.

The second year, twenty students were selected to participate in a learning community. Study groups set up and coordinated by student group leaders met for three to five hours a week. Students shared information, discussed and helped each other complete course work, provided social support for school and personal difficulties, prepared for examinations, and shared computer and other academic resources. They evaluated the faculty's quality of teaching and helpfulness to Latino students and discussed current events, such as the Los Angeles riots. They were encouraged to take classes together.

Learning communities create opportunities for students to develop peer support networks as well as a sense of broader participation in college life.

In addition to these weekly meetings, each month, guest speakers shared personal experiences about teaching and teaching techniques. Films with culturally relevant content broadened the participants' experiences and awareness of issues affecting them as Latinos. Social events, both planned and spontaneous, served to build a sense of community.

Most mentoring and advising were conducted by the project director and project assistant. Every week an information session was held to discuss questions about requirements, testing, and other issues of concern. The project director also counseled students individually.

Workshops were conducted on specific topics such as completing a portfolio, word processing for academic work, children's literature and music, and Spanish. Group leaders and participants received a modest stipend, and the project paid for the CBEST. A future teachers club for Latinos, OXLE, was established to continue and expand on the work of the project.

Most Successful Components

THE PROGRAM successfully identified the reasons why students were not completing the credential program and then designed and implemented a program to address them.

A POSITIVE sense of community—both with one another and with the field of teaching—was created among students, especially through OXLE; students participating in the program felt less isolated than they had before and felt more connected with the field of teaching.

PROVIDING STUDENTS with information about the credential program helped them meet deadlines and satisfy requirements.

Areas for Future Development

A LARGER, permanent facility for the learning center and improved access to parking will increase students' use of the center and encourage them to attend meetings.

SPECIAL EFFORTS will counteract the reasons students cite for not using academic support services on campus, i.e., lack of time, fear of looking stupid, rumors of bad experiences with tutors.

STREAMLINED REGISTRATION will enable students to take classes together as a cluster (the current computerized system precludes this approach.)

TRANSFER RATES of students from community colleges will increase.

WHAT STUDENTS SAID THEY LIKED BEST

The sense of community, which fostered a feeling of trust, and opportunities to talk in a safe setting about culturally sensitive topics.

Study groups and student support, which encouraged students in their studies and created a strong bond among them.

Workshops and help preparing for the CBEST.

Information and support provided by the staff, especially on filling out forms and fulfilling requirements.

Being part of an organization within the university; pride in being part of the project.

FUTURE OF THE PROJECT

Most of the program participants are expected to complete the requirements for the bachelor's degree and then continue on to the credential program. Members of OXLE, with continuing advice from the project director, intend to incorporate the principles of the learning community into club activities.

Southwest Texas State University

Southwest Texas State University (SWT) is located in San Marcos, Texas, about half an hour's drive from the state capital, Austin. The seventh largest institution of higher learning in Texas, SWT is a major regional, comprehensive university with an enrollment of more than 20,800 students, 16 percent of whom are Latino. Enrollment in the School of Education represents about 15 percent of total enrollment. Overall, about 30 percent of students graduate within six years of enrolling as freshmen.

In 1992-93, 11 percent of the approximately 1,100 full-time administrators, faculty, and professional staff were from ethnic minorities compared with 9 percent in the School of Education.

SWT encompasses a graduate school, a college of general studies, seven undergraduate schools, and thirty instructional departments offering a wide range of bachelor's and master's degrees. Many degrees include teacher certification.

The San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District serves 6,500 children, 60 percent of whom are Latinos. Although the share of Latino teachers is higher than that of many areas, it is still less than 20 percent. The district also employs forty teacher aides.

SWT

SWT LEARNING COMMUNITY: PROJECT EDIT

Goals

SWT's Learning Community project, named the Enhancing Diversity in Teaching Project (EDIT), sought to tap an alternative pool of teacher candidates and create a learning community in which undergraduates gained reality-based experience in the schools and teacher aides gained the opportunity to become certified teachers. Its principal strategy was to provide support and assistance so that promising minority students would have a better chance of completing the teacher education program.

Target Population

The target population consisted of minority juniors and seniors enrolled in teacher education and teacher aides working in the San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District.

Key Components

EDIT created a learning community that included teacher aides and undergraduate students. Ten teacher aides employed by the school district and interested in becoming certified teachers had their tuition and fees paid for

up to six hours of classes each semester and received up to six hours of release time to attend classes leading to certification. Other aides participated in activities but did not receive financial assistance or release time. Most of these persons were in their freshman or sophomore year of college.

In addition, ten teacher education students, most of whom were juniors or seniors, received a $500 stipend each semester. Others participated in some activities but did not receive stipends.

Opportunities for teacher education students to work in actual classrooms provide professional awareness and enhanced appreciation of classroom realities.

The basis of EDIT was the buddy system in which ten undergraduates were paired with ten teacher aides. For six hours each week, the aide attended classes at SWT, while the teacher education student worked in the aide's classroom. This exchange gave students the opportunity to gain classroom experience, allowed the aide to attend college, and minimized the disruption of the classroom's daily routine.

Each week, participants attended a 90-minute seminar led by an outside facilitator. Topics included enhancing academic success, getting the first teaching assignment, applying for financial aid, managing stress, and balancing the demands of family and career.

Increasing student familiarity with technological advances used in today's classrooms was a salient feature of the EDIT project.

To strengthen the relationship between students and faculty, five social events were held each year. These were organized by the participants in conjunction with the project coordinators.

Two professors from the university and two teachers from the school district served as faculty mentors to the project. They maintained ongoing, informal contact with the participants, planned and delivered two of the weekly project seminars each semester, attended all social events, and accompanied participants to one professional conference each year.

EDIT helped students tap into a support network that was a source of job opportunities and other services. It also provided a forum in which they could discuss educational issues with students who shared their interests.

Most Successful Components

THE BUDDY system gave aides the resources and time they needed to begin college and undergraduates the classroom experience they needed to be successful teachers.

IMPROVING THE collaboration among the university, school districts, and the community helped the university identify a nontraditional pool of prospective teachers and enhanced its ability to recruit minority teachers responsive to the community's needs.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE and help with paperwork successfully recruited aides who would otherwise not have considered attending college.

Areas for Development

Because instructional aides were reluctant to commit themselves to the program for fear of change, pressures of time and responsibilities, lack of support from their family, and logistical problems with parking and scheduling, recruitment and retention of this target group will be enhanced.

Efforts should be made to counteract the reluctance of students to use academic support services on campus because they are pressed for time, have scheduling problems, or are afraid of looking stupid.

Expanding the faculty mentoring system and making it more responsive to the needs of nontraditional students will improve work with this group.

A permanent learning center facility should be provided for studying, holding meetings, storing reference materials, and encouraging aides and students to mix.

What Students and Aides Said They Liked Best

Networking with other students with similar backgrounds.

"Real world" classroom experience, which was considered invaluable to them as prospective teachers and gave them an edge over other candidates.

The accessibility and helpfulness of the project staff.

Financial assistance and release time from classroom assignments, especially for aides.

Assistance with the bureaucracy of the institution, such as fulfilling prerequisites and completing registration.

Future of the Project

EDIT will continue under the LBJ Program, which is funded by a Texas Education Agency grant to maintain a professional development center.

University of Texas at El Paso

The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) is located in the largest bilingual metropolitan (nearly 2 million people) along the border between the United States and Mexico. Comprised of six colleges and a Graduate School, UTEP offers sixty-eight baccalaureate degree options, dozens of master's degrees, and several doctoral degree options. Overall, UTEP employs 748 faculty members, 19 percent of whom were Latino in the fall of 1992; in the College of Education, 26 percent are Latino. Of UTEP's 17,000 students, 60 percent are Latino, with another 1,000s students from Mexico, who cross the border daily to attend the University. UTEP enrolls one-eighth of all Mexican national students studying in the United States.

UTEP graduates about 500 teachers per year to serve the local school districts. Nearly 80 percent of all teachers in the region are UTEP graduates. Because 60 percent of these graduates are Latino, UTEP is becoming a center for innovation and professional development of Latino teachers who can work in a bilingual, bicultural setting. Its graduates are recruited from school districts all over the country.

UTEP

UTEP LEARNING COMMUNITY

Goals

The UTEP program emphasized recruitment of Latinos to the teaching profession. UTEP sought to increase the pool of high school students entering the university in general and the school of education in particular as well as to support students already in the university's Alternative Certification Program.

Target Population

A group of twenty Latinos majoring in bilingual education and enrolled in the 1991–92 Alternative Certification Program (ACP) were the key participants for the first year of the project; after that, the scope was broadened and refocused to include high school seniors and binational teachers from El Paso and Ciudad Juárez.

Key Components

The Teacher Learning Community Center was located in the College of Education and designed specifically for group activities and informal, daily use. The facility was refurbished and now contains lockers, a desk station for the room coordinator and tutors, and bookcases, tables, and chairs for groups and individuals to use.

The first year of the program focused on students enrolled in the Alternative Certification Program. Twenty majors in bilingual education attended workshops on special topics, such as preparation for ExCET, were assigned faculty mentors on campus and teacher mentors in public schools, and benefited from the array of counseling and career support services offered through the Teacher Learning Community Center and other student affairs offices. Services included leadership development, career planning, financial aid advising, counseling and peer-support sessions. Encouraged to become involved in professional networks, participants attended the first meeting of the Southwest Association for Bilingual Educators and the annual meeting of the National Association for Bilingual Education.

Well-planned, continual recruitment efforts bring future Latino teachers into the teacher education process. Here, a high-school senior and his father participate together in a learning community workshop.

This intensive support was highly successful—all twenty participants completed the program—but was found to duplicate services already offered on campus. Therefore, in the second year, the project continued to offer limited support to ACP students but redirected its efforts to recruiting high school students and building a learning community between teachers in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez.

The UTEP project also emphasized recruitment. The effort to recruit high school students included holding a student and parent workshop three times a year to promote teaching as a career and answer any questions about college, helping students fill out application and financial aid forms, disseminating information on college life and services, and offering follow-up and support (including academic assistance, clustering of students, and community-

building activities) once new students arrived on campus. Because many of these prospective teachers are the first members of their family to attend college, keeping parents involved and informed was key to the recruitment effort. In 1992–93, forty high school students attended these sessions, and twenty-eight of them enrolled in UTEP for the fall semester of 1993-94.

Building on the region's bicultural heritage and UTEP's strong relations with Mexico, the Teacher Learning Community Center also sought to build a learning community of teachers from both sides of the border. The center trained 150 teachers in cooperative learning skills and methodology, promoted collaboration and sharing of resources, sponsored cultural exchange programs, and organized a binational conference on cooperative learning.

Teachers from El Paso and Juárez work together to share international understandings in education.

One outcome of the project was the increased awareness at all levels within the university of the need to recruit and retain Latino students. This led to establishing and strengthening ties between the university and groups such as the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence, the public school districts, and Juárez's Technical Institute. It also strengthened ties within the university among the College of Education, Tutoring and Learning Center, Student Affairs, and the Center for Inter-American and Border Studies.

As a result of this program, UTEP is seen as an innovator in the movement to employ new methods of recruiting and retaining minority students, as well as a leader in new teacher education methods.

Most Successful Components

The Teacher Learning Community Center facility created a gathering place for students and gave them a sense of ownership and community. The center was also a convenient location for conducting the project's many activities and workshops.

Involving parents in the high school recruitment program demonstrated that family support and understanding determine the success or failure of many Latino students.

Training sessions for Juárez teachers increased their confidence and promoted the concept of cooperative learning in Mexico, which supplies such a large share of UTEP's student body.

Areas for Future Development

Making the program itself a formal and permanent part of the university will avoid the shifting of priorities and changes in personnel that could limit its impact.

Improved scheduling will provide more opportunities for students and mentors to meet and expansion of the mentoring component itself.

Providing incentives for Latino faculty in the College of Education to participate, perhaps by freeing them from other responsibilities that take up so much of their time, will increase interactions among Latino faculty and students.

What Student and Teacher Participants Said They Liked Best

Students appreciated the workshops, especially those related to completing admission and financial aid forms, which they felt were daunting.

Students appreciated receiving moral support that decreased their feelings of isolation and connected them with the field of teacher education.

Students said that they were motivated by hearing speakers such as the president of UTEP and the dean of education, who made them feel important, and by having someone share their experiences with them.

The bi-national teachers felt they benefited from learning and sharing the latest teaching technologies, which made them feel like "Pioneers of the Frontier," a boost to their confidence in their teaching.

The bi-national teachers enjoyed collaborating with teachers on the other side of the border and practicing their language skills.

Future of the Project

Specific plans to continue and expand three key areas of the UTEP Learning Communities program are now being implemented. Additional activities for high school recruitment are in place; more sessions and topics for bi-national training have been confirmed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Participants at all four sites were surveyed twice and interviewed once during the program. They were asked how the program influenced their educational experience and which elements they considered to be the most and least successful. The overwhelming consensus was that these programs were successful because they relieved their sense of isolation from one another, from the university, and even from the profession of teaching; helped them manage the bureaucracy and complete the requisite forms and class requirements; increased their satisfaction by increasing their level of responsibility; and improved their study skills. The success of each program seemed to be due, in large part, to the talents and energy of the persons in charge rather than to the steady commitment of the sponsoring institution. In fact, weak institutional commitment and support were often a barrier to implementation.

The least successful components included the difficulty of convincing students to use the resources available, particularly tutoring services (the exception was CSUSB, which used peer mentors as tutors); the lack of faculty involvement and the inability of faculty, even Latino faculty, to offer support relevant to the needs of nontraditional students; and the difficulty of scheduling activities, including mentoring, so that both faculty and students could attend. Practical problems such as lack of space for a center, difficulties finding parking, and conflicting schedules for work and study discouraged a surprising number of students from participating fully.

These qualitative observations indicate how students responded to the program in the short run. They do not indicate whether the long-term objectives of improving recruitment and retention or institutionalizing the program were achieved. The time horizon was too short for such an evaluation, since a program that was implemented for only two years will not follow students through graduation and into the classroom. The responses are encouraging, however, and each university has agreed to incorporate the approach into existing programs in one way or another.

The following recommendations are intended for any university seeking to use the concept of a learning community to improve the performance of nontraditional students.

Institutions committed to increasing the recruitment and retention of Latinos in their teacher education programs should begin to collect and distribute information on their success rate; at present, information on minorities in teacher education programs and in universities as a whole is sorely lacking and prevents the impact of programs such as the learning community from being evaluated quantitatively.

A formal or informal needs assessment should always be conducted to determine where money and effort would be best spent; this is particularly true in programs targeting nontraditional students, whose needs are often different from those of traditional students and whose experiences making the transition from a community college to a four-year university are poorly understood.

Incentives must be devised to encourage faculty to become mentors and active participants in a learning community; offering release time from other responsibilities is one approach, as is training them to recognize and address the needs of nontraditional students.

Coordination throughout the university or college administrative and academic offices is needed to prevent duplication of effort and waste of resources.

Involving families—especially spouses or parents—is an essential ingredient of success; lack of familial support sabotages the desire of many Latino students to complete their education; family and community outreach can begin to counteract the lack of respect for teaching as a career that limits a school's ability to recruit potential teachers.

Long-term, institutional commitment in the form of financing, infrastructure, and cooperation is required of the college or university at all levels; a permanent space is crucial because scheduling can be a serious problem.

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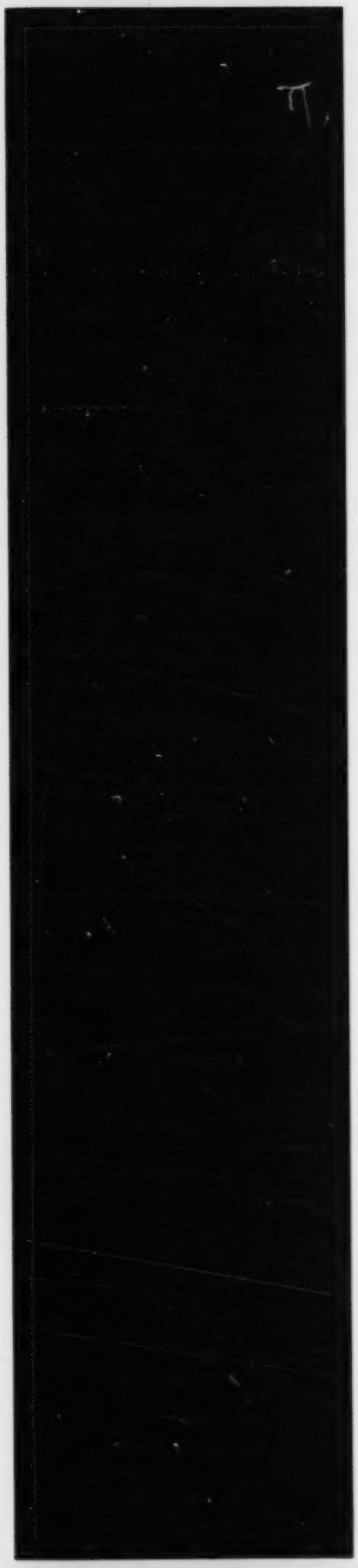
The Tomás Rivera Center (TRC) is a national institute for policy studies dedicated to promoting the well-being of the nation's Latino population through the improvement of policies and programs. The TRC addresses policies and programs to improve the quality of education, employment, and human services available to Latinos, to create better economic opportunities for the Latino community, and to increase Latino participation in the governance of American institutions. Toward this end, the Center addresses national issues affecting Latinos and gives national voice to their concerns.

The TRC began operating in 1985 as an affiliate of The Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, California, with the support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, The William and Flora Hewlett Founda-tion, The James Irvine Foundation, and The Times Mirror Foundation. In 1988, an office was established at Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, with the assistance of The Rockefeller Foundation and the United Services Automobile Association (USAA).

The Tomás Rivera Center is dedicated to the memory of one of its founders, the late Tomás Rivera (1935-1984), distinguished educator, prizewinning writer, and at the time of his death, chancellor of the University of California, Riverside.



THE TOMÁS RIVERA CENTER
A National Institute for Policy Studies

710 North College Avenue
Claremont, California 91711
909.625.6607

715 Stadium Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78212
210.736.8376